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Matthew Ormiston
THE *Oxford 1789*
BAPTISM
OF
INFANTS,
A

REASONABLE SERVICE;

Founded upon SCRIPTURE, and undoubted
APOSTOLIC TRADITION:

In which
Its MORAL PURPOSES and USE in RELIGION
are shewn.

*Suffer the little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not;
for of such is the kingdom of God. Mark x. 14.*

The SECOND EDITION.



Michael Toogood -

L O N D O N :

Printed and Sold by J. WAUGH, at the *Turk's Head*
in *Lombard-Street*; and A. TOZER, in *Exeter*.

M D C C L I I I .



P R E F A C E.



THE undue and superstitious stress, which has been laid upon BAPTISING INFANTS, by some ill instructed Christians; has, doubtless, been the chief occasion of its being treated with such *unreasonable* opposition by others.

When we hear *Austin, Fulgentius, Gregory*—and many others of great name, amongst those called the *holy fathers*, with solemnity pronouncing—“*That Infants can have no salvation, if they die without Baptism.*”—“*That we must hold for certain and undoubted that they are ignis eterni sempiterno supplicio puniendi to be tormented with the everlasting punishment of eternal fire.*”—“*And, interminabilia gehennæ sustinere supplicia, ubi diabolus, &c. That they suffer the endless torments of hell, where the devil with his angels*

“ *are to burn for evermore.*”—Again, “ *As the UNBAPTISED INFANT cannot go into the kingdom of heaven, you must acknowledge he will be in everlasting fire.*”—Finally, “ *If Infants have not had the sacrament of salvation (i. e. Baptism) for their deliverance from original sin, they pass into perpetual torments.*”—When we hear, I say, this ceremony of *baptismal-water* exalted into an affair of such *infinite* importance, the mind is naturally shocked: it rises with indignation against the monstrous absurdity and even impiety of such tenets; and (which is but too common to human nature) the transports of zeal hurry it into the opposite *extreme*: to depreciate and run down, a *rite* so unduely magnified: and, whilst pulling it from the high rank it had usurped in *religion*, to cast it quite out; and to allow it no *use* nor *place* in it at all.

The *middle-way* betwixt these two *extremes*, is that which is here chosen. It can with no reason be imagined, that a God of infinite mercy, *who hateth nothing that he hath made*, will permit the *having*, or the *wanting*, the ceremony of *baptismal-water*, to determine finally and irrevocably the *everlasting* state of a dying Infant: or, that for the neglect of this *ceremonial washing*, (which yet the Infant could in no wise help) it shall be doomed to everlasting torments amongst devils and apostate spirits. This be far from the *almighty JUDGE*!

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The *Baptism that saves* (a) (or, that at all profits any, whether *Infant* or *adult*) is not the external *washing*, but the *answer of a good conscience*; or the pious and devout sentiments with which that ceremony is performed. In persons *adult*; the religious and sincere affections with which *they* consecrate *themselves* to God: and in *Infants*; the unfeigned piety; the gratitude and the faith, with which their *parents* devote *them* to him. The meer ceremony of applying water is comparatively of little moment.

But, that the *Baptism of Infants* is a *rite* ordained of God, and a *rite* of great advantage and use in Religion, the following treatise, it is hoped, will show. In which it is considered, rather as a standing *token*, than as a proper *instrument* or *mean*, of God's mercy and grace to us; a perpetual *memorial* instituted in the church, *signifying* to believers God's readiness to pour down his *spirit* upon them, and his *blessing* upon their offspring; not properly a *canal* (as some affect to talk) by which these are conveyed to us.

The argument from *antiquity* or *apostolic tradition*, has not, perhaps, been often presented to the public, in so *contracted* and *clear* a light as its importance deserves. It is, principally for the sake of this; and to represent the *moral purposes* of Infant-Baptism, that the ensuing tract appears.

If

(a) 1 Pet. iii. 21.

If sentiments, on the future state of *dying* Infants, may here be thought by some, too freely expressed; they may,—it is hoped, be admitted as *conjectures* at least, upon an interesting subject; upon which however the Baptism of Infants has no essential dependance, that resting securely upon other considerations, whatever force be allowed to these.

The author delights not in controversy, nor intends to engage in any, on the subject of these papers; having seldom seen good arising from altercations of this kind. But the light in which the argument is here set having been approved by several, to whose judgment he owes great deference, it is here presented to publick view. As far as it speaks *truth*, may the God of *truth* succeed it! To his favour it is commended: and to the attentive perusal of the candid and sincere.





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T H E

Published by the same AUTHOR,

D I P P I N G

Not the only

Scriptural and Primitive MANNER

O F

B A P T I Z I N G:

And supposing it were, yet a strict adherence to it not
obligatory on us.

In the Press and speedily will be published,

A

D E F E N C E

O F

Infant Baptism, in point of Antiquity;

Against the

Exceptions of Dr. John Gill, and others.



THE INTRODUCTION.

A general view of the several dispensations of religion with respect to
INFANTS.



FROM the exactest observations, it appears, that of those who are born into the world, scarce a *third part* attain to the age even of *one year*. *Thousands of* INFANTS every day languish under grievous distempers; are tortured, convulsed, and in piteous agonies give up the ghost.—This, at first, seems a very *strange* dispensation; hardly reconcileable with the *wisdom* and *justice*, much less with the *goodness* and *mercy* of God. It is scarce possible not to ask—how comes it to pass, that millions of harmless babes, in whose frame is displayed such infinite skill; who are formed with *capacities* of such exalted attainments, both intellectual and moral; with *capacities* of an happiness *ever growing*, and *ever-lasting*, in the knowledge, imitation, and enjoy-

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ment of God.—How comes it to pass, that they only thus glance upon the coasts of life; are just brought into the world with exquisite pains, moan away a few weeks of misery and disease upon it, and then in terrible convulsions, fall victims to death! What *light* has God cast upon this *dark scene* of his providence? Has he left it quite covered with impenetrable clouds? And, where the interest and comfort of so great a part of his *intelligent creation* are deeply concerned, has he given no intimations which may be a solid ground of *hope*? It can never be supposed.

There are *four dispensations*, under which RELIGION has principally subsisted since *the fall*, viz. the dispensation of the *Light of Nature*, the *Abrahamic*, the *Mosaic*, and the *Christian*. Now, each of these casts *some light* upon this awful scene, and administers *some hope* as to *suffering and dying Infants*. Let it then be enquired

FIRST. What judgment doth REASON, or the *Light of Nature*, pass upon their case? There are but *two* ways, in which REASON can account for this procedure of providence, viz. by supposing these suffering *Infants* to have existed in *some former* state; or that they will exist in *some future*.

Some have imagined, that they have *existed* and *misbehaved* in a former state of being; and that their sufferings in *the present*, are a correction or punishment for evils done *there*. This the *Platonic* philosophy taught: and it seems to have been an opinion not uncommon amongst the *Jews*, in the days of our Saviour. Concerning the man *that was born blind*, the disciples, therefore, ask him—*master who did sin; this man, or his parents; that he was born blind* (a): But this *præexistence* of Infants, being a matter of *absolute uncertainty*; unsupported by any solid or probable grounds; REASON derives

(a) John ix. 2.

rives its *principal* satisfaction, from the supposition of their existence in a *state after death*. There, the Almighty RECTOR can give them pleasures and entertainments abundantly to counterbalance the sufferings of their present state.

This is what REASON, I say, *surmises* and *hopes*; but cannot *certainly* conclude. It wants some REVELATION, some *promise* from GOD, to give stability and vigor to these *wavering hopes*. And under all the conflicts and pains which he sees his *dying child* suffer, the pious parent has nothing, from the *Light of Nature*, whereon to trust, but the *uncovenanted* goodness and mercy of GOD. Now, were it not, in these circumstances, a *most desirable thing*, that GOD would give us some *revelation* or *promise concerning* our INFANTS? Some *covenant* to assure us, that they are the objects of his favour and peculiar regard; and that as they *suffer* and *die* in this world, so they shall be *raised again* to life and happiness in the other? Was not, I ask, some such *covenant, revelation, or promise*, concerning *our* INFANTS, what nature greatly wanted, wished for and desired; and, if GOD should be pleased to grant it, ought it not to be highly valued, and most thankfully received (b)? Behold!

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(b) There is a very *rational* and *just* sense, in which GOD may be said to *establish his covenant with* INFANTS. For the scripture expressly saith, Gen. ix. 9, 10, 12, 13. that he *established his covenant*, even, *with the cattle and the fowl*; solemnly engaging no more to *drown them by a flood*. Is there any thing *strange*, then, or *unreasonable*, in GOD's establishing his covenant *with Infants*; solemnly engaging to *pour his spirit and blessing on them*? Or, that the evils they suffer in consequence of *Adam's sin*, shall be removed and amply recompensed through the righteousness of *Christ*? Most surely not at all.—

But, if there is a *rational* and *just* sense, in which GOD may *establish his covenant with* INFANTS; there is the highest reason to *presume* that he actually *HAS done it*, and that they are taken

SECONDLY. *This* we see done, in the ABRAHAMIC dispensation. For as GOD's covenant-transactions with *Abraham* were the foundation, or charter of the church, which, in after ages, he intended to gather, and to erect amongst men: so he, here, gives pious parents an *express promise* and *revelation* concerning *their* INFANTS. He promises to be A GOD to *Abraham*, and to *his seed*; and takes *his* INFANTS into covenant, together with *himself*; commanding the TOKEN of the covenant to be solemnly affixed to *them*, as a standing testimony or sign that JEHOVAH was *their* GOD. See Gen. xvii. 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14. GOD said, *I will establish my covenant between me, and thee (Abraham) and thy seed after thee, in their generations; to be a GOD to thee, and to thy seed after thee—and I will be THEIR GOD. This is my covenant which ye shall keep—every man-child among you, that is eight days old, shall be circumcised. The uncircumcised man-child shall be cut off from his people.* Circumcision then, by GOD's express command, was affixed to *Abraham's* INFANTS, and to the INFANTS of all such as believed in the GOD of *Abraham*, as a TOKEN of *his* covenant; which covenant was, that JEHOVAH would be *their* GOD.

Now, when the ALMIGHTY covenants and promises to be THE GOD of *these* Infants, what does it imply? Undoubtedly something GREAT, viz. that he will be, in a peculiar manner, their guardian and

taken into his covenant: for if he graciously condescended to *establish his* covenant with the brute creation, promising no more to deluge them; and appointed a standing token or memorial of this covenant, viz. the bow in the clouds; much more, surely, may we hope, that he hath *established his* covenant also with INFANTS, promising to deliver them from the fatal consequences of the fall; and that he has appointed a standing token or sign of this covenant, to perpetuate its knowledge and remembrance in the church.

and *benefactor*; that he will take them under the *especial* patronage and care of his providence, influences of his spirit, and ministration of his angels; and that if they died in their Infant-state, before any transgression had put them out of the covenant, they should certainly be raised to an *happiness* after death.—That *this* was the undoubted import or meaning of this promise, the scripture hath clearly taught us.—Now that the dead are raised, Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord, the GOD of Abraham and THE GOD of Isaac (c) &c. And again, GOD is not ashamed to be called THEIR GOD; for he hath prepared for them a city (d), *i. e.* an happiness in some future state. And again, I will be HIS GOD (e), is explained by, *he shall be my SON*: but, whoever is a son of GOD, and dies in that relation, will infallibly be declared or manifested to be such by a glorious resurrection. See Rom. viii. 19. Luke xx. 36.

That *this* token of the *Abrahamic covenant*, assured a resurrection to future happiness to an *Infant* dying under it, may be further proved thus—suppose one of *Abraham's* circumcised Infants lay languishing under tormenting pains, and gave up the ghost. An *infidel* stands by, and seeing the MARK in its flesh, scoffingly asks—what *that* MARK means? He is told, it is a TOKEN of the covenant into which JEHOVAH took the child; and by which he solemnly declared, that he received it as *his own*, and engaged to be *its* GOD. But what gets the child, the *Infidel* demands, by having JEHOVAH for its GOD? Is he not ashamed to be called

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(c) Luke xx. 37. A state of *death*, is a state of *punishment*; God's calling himself then, the GOD of *Abraham*, when he lay in a *state of death*, was a clear proof that he would not leave him always to continue in it.

(d) Heb. xi. 16.

(e) Rev. xxi. 7.

THE GOD of that emaciated, tortured, breathless Infant? No, it is replied, because he will *raise it from the dead*, and give it happiness in a future state. Else, indeed, he would *be ashamed to be called THE GOD of such a babe*. But we proceed to consider

THIRDLY. The MOSAIC *dispensation*; and the farther strength which *this* gives to these *rational hopes*. Now, here, we see *another COVENANT*, besides that of *circumcision*, into which INFANTS were taken. Deut. xxix. 10, 11, 12. *Ye stand this day, all of you, before the Lord YOUR GOD; your captains, your elders, your LITTLE-ONES, your wives, that thou shouldst ENTER INTO COVENANT with the Lord thy GOD: that he may establish thee to day for A PEOPLE unto himself; and that he may be unto thee A GOD, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, &c.*—So Ezek. xvi. 20, 21. *Moreover, thou hast taken thy sons, and thy daughters, which thou hast BORN UNTO ME; and these hast thou sacrificed unto the Idols: thou hast slain MY CHILDREN (e).* Thus our LORD himself, when an *Infant*, was brought into *the Temple*, as were all the first-born *Infant-Males*, and there *solemnly devoted*, as HOLY, to GOD. Luke ii. 22, 23.—Hence then, it is most evident, that the *Jewish INFANTS*, in consequence of their dedication to GOD, and admission into *his covenant*, were in a *peculiar manner HIS*; his property, and his children, in a sense in which the *Infants* of the idolatrous and uncircumcised *Gentiles* were not. But of these, multitudes, no doubt, died in their *Infant state*. What now might be concluded concerning the case of such? Undoubtedly this: That, as they died *in covenant with GOD*, (by which covenant he had

(e) A child, on the day of its *circumcision*, was wont to be called *Chatan*, because it was then considered as *espoused to GOD*, and united to his people. Vid. Schindler in Verb. Lexic. Pent. pag. 677.

had engaged to take them for a *people to himself*, to acknowledge them as *his children*, and to be to them a *God* and as no *advantage* nor *happiness* was given them in this world, at all answerable to *these characters*; but they miserably languished, like all other Infants, and at last died under the primitive condemnation or judgment; it therefore certainly remained, that they will be *raised again* and exist in some *after state*; where an *happiness* will be given them suitable to *these great promises*, and where they will be treated as the *people* and the *children of God*. For else, God would plainly seem to have *broken his covenant*; and the solemn and grand promise of being a *God* to such an *Infant*, and of taking it for *his child*, proves a very *mean and insignificant* thing.

These are the *hopes* which *Reason* surmises, and which the several dispensations both of *Abraham*, and of *Moses*, strongly confirm. We proceed to observe

FOURTHLY. How they are farther brightned by the *dispensation of JESUS CHRIST*. As this was to be the *last*, and the *most perfect* display of God's mercy to fallen men; in which the riches of his abounding grace were to be *most fully* revealed; it can never be imagined to *come short*, in any points of the *two former dispensations*. Did God take the *Infants of believers* into covenant with himself, under *Abraham* and *Moses*; and command, that as a standing *token* of it, the *seal of the covenant* should be solemnly affixed to them; but, under *JESUS his SON*, has he made *no such* manifestation of his merciful regard to them; admitted them visibly into *no covenant*; nor appointed *any token* that he receives them as *his children*, and that he will be to them a *God*? How utterly *unlikely*, as well as *uncomfortable*

able is the thought. Thanks to his mercy! We can with good assurance say, *that is not the case.*—

No. But when *Infants* were once brought to our SAVIOUR, to be *made partakers* of the blessings of *his kingdom*; he openly and severely rebuked his Disciples, and was *highly displeased* with them, for endeavouring to *hinder* it. He kindly *took them into his arms*; *laid his hands upon them*; and *blessed them*; and COMMANDED that LITTLE CHILDREN should be suffered to come, *i. e.* be brought, to him, and NOT BE FORBIDDEN; declaring *that of such is the kingdom of God* (f), *i. e.* that *these*, also, have a place in the kingdom of *the Messiah*, which was now to be set up; and a right to the *blessings* which himself, the *promised KING*, was come to bestow.

At another time, he *took A LITTLE CHILD into his arms*, and shewing it to his Disciples, *sais, whosoever shall receive one such little Child, this Child, in my name, receiveth me* (g). Now the *receiving a Child in CHRIST'S NAME* must mean the considering, or treating, it as *standing in some peculiar relation to CHRIST*; as *τὸ κρῖς ἐν ἐμοὶ belonging to Christ*; as being a subject of *his kingdom*, or a part of *his flock*. That this is what *our LORD* means by, *receiving in HIS NAME*, himself has expressly shewn by thus explaining it in this same discourse, *because ye belong to Christ* (h): *whoso shall give you a cup of water to drink, IN MY NAME, because YE BELONG TO CHRIST, verily I say unto you, &c.* Hence, then it is most evident, *that INFANTS* may be, *yea are to be, received in CHRIST'S NAME*; and that by this we are to understand, *receiving them as BELONGING* or *standing in some peculiar relation, to CHRIST*; but in this *peculiar relation to CHRIST*

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(f) Mat. xix. 14. Mark. x. 14. Luke xviii. 16.
 (g) Mat. xviii. 5. Mark ix. 37. Luke ix. 48.
 (h) Mark ix. 41.

an INFANT can no otherwise stand than by being *solemnly devoted* to him, and *admitted into* his kingdom and church.

And, that INFANTS were to be admitted into the *kingdom of the MESSIAH*, or into that *incorporated society* of which he is the *head*, is quite rational to presume : for as they stood in *absolute need* of the redemption or grace which MESSIAH, the king, came to bestow on mankind ; and as provision was made by the covenant of GOD for their *actual* receiving it ; so there was the strongest reason to expect, that they would be *solemnly acknowledged*, and *declared* to be a part of *that society or church* which should be thus *blessed* and *saved* by him. In other words, that as they were *condemned* through the FIRST ADAM and treated as *sinners* ; so they should be *justified* through the SECOND ADAM and treated as *righteous*. But, if they were to be *treated as righteous*, and to be *solemnly declared* a part of that society, or church, whom CHRIST came to *save* ; they were, then, *to be baptized* ; for *Baptism* was the *ceremony* in which all, who by GOD's covenant had a right to *salvation*, were to be admitted into the church, and *solemnly declared* to be of the number of *the saved*.

That, in the eye of the *christian law*, INFANTS are actually under a *sentence of condemnation* and considered as *sinners*, by being made *to suffer death* the punishment and effect of sin, cannot be denied. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon ALL, for that* (æq̃ æ, ad quod, as far as which) or (*per quem* through whom) ALL are treated as if they *had sinned* (i). Rom. v. 12.

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(i) *Iniquity* and *sin* are very frequently used in scripture, where not any real guilt or moral turpitude is meant, but only the

By one man's offence judgment came upon ALL men to condemnation. ver. 18. By one man's offence many were made sinners. ver. 19. In Adam ALL die, 1 Cor. xv. 22. Though INFANTS are incapable of any moral or proper guilt, yet as in the wise scheme of God's providence they are at present subjected to innumerable pains, diseases, and death, the penal effects of SIN, through the disobedience of Adam; they are, agreeably to the style of scripture, said to have sinned, and to be made, i.e. treated as, sinners.

Now, the same discourse of *the Apostle*, which represents them as *condemned* and *suffering* through ADAM; represents them also as *justified* and *saved* by JESUS CHRIST. For, *as by the offence of one (ADAM) judgment came upon ALL men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one (CHRIST) the free gift came upon all men to justification of life: for as by the disobedience of one, many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous (k).* As much as to say, the *salutary effects* of the second Adam's virtue, are as *EXTENSIVE* as the *penal ones* of the first Adam's sin: or, as the *malignity* of that first offence reached even to *INFANTS*, subjecting them to death; so the *benefit* of CHRIST's obedience reaches also to *Infants*, justifying, absolving, and restoring them to life. It procures for and gives to them that *SPIRIT of life*, which releases
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the *effects* or the *punishment* of sin. See *Gen. xix. 15. 1 Sam. xxviii. 10. 2 Kin. vii. 9. Isa. liii. 6, 11, 12. 1 Pet. ii. 24. 2 Cor. v. 21. Heb. ix. 28.* And this suggests an *ease*, and, doubtless, the *true* sense of that much controverted text, *Psal. li. 5. I was shapen in INIQUITY, and in SIN did my mother conceive me:* alluding to the *bitter SORROWS* in which, in consequence of the *first SIN*, (*Gen. iii. 16.*) the woman is sentenced to *conceive and to bring forth.*

(k) *Rom. v. 18, 19.*

and sets them free from the *law of sin and death*. Now of GOD's giving, and of men's receiving this *life-giving SPIRIT*, the *baptismal water* is the appointed *token*, or *emblem*, in the church.

This the scripture plainly intimates, by saying Tit. iii. 5. We are *SAVED*, by the *washing of regeneration* (i. e. *Baptism*, the sign) and by the *renewing of the HOLY GHOST* (the thing signified in that ceremonial washing) *which he bath shed* (*ἐξέχευ* *POURED OUT*) upon us abundantly, through *Jesus Christ our Lord*.

From this discourse of the Apostle (*Rom. v.*) the following deductions evidently flow. 1. That in the construction of the Christian Law, *Infants* are, most certainly, in a state of *condemnation*, and are treated as *sinners*. 2. That they are, therefore, *capable* of justification or remission, and stand in *absolute need* of it; in as much as, without it, they must eternally lie under the sentence of *death*. 3. As they are *capable* of this grace, and stand in *absolute need* of it; *express provision* is made, in the constitution of the *GOSPEL-COVENANT*, for their *being justified and saved*. But 4. All who by the Gospel-Covenant are entitled to *justification, salvation, and life*, are entitled also to *Baptism*; for *Baptism* is a rite, instituted by *GOD*, to *signify* or *betoken* that those, who are entitled to the blessings of his covenant, shall certainly receive them.

The *Baptism of Infants*, viewed in this light, is a very *rational* institution. The great *PARENT* of mankind having, in the *wisdom* of his providence, subjected so vast a part of the race to miseries and pains through no default of their own; it was quite reasonable to believe, that his *mercy* would appoint them some *testimony* of his favour, some *monument* or *pledge* that he had not abandoned this noble part of his creation to the *ruin and death* under which

they were fallen. That, as they continually suffered the *visible tokens* of his displeasure in a variety of tormenting agonies; so, he would graciously ordain them also some *visible token* of his good-will, some perpetual and standing *sign*, of his still accounting them *HIS children*, and that they were yet the objects of his *tender* and *parental* regard. It was perfectly just, I say, and reasonable to imagine, that the *great* PARENT of these tortured and suffering *innocents*, whenever he erected a *church* upon earth, would appoint some such *standing token* of his mercy and favour to them. Now this, we see, he did under the two former dispensations, both of *Abraham* and of *Moses*: and great consolation it, doubtless, gave their pious parents under these dispensations, when they saw them languishing in extreme pains and giving up the ghost, to reflect upon the *solemn token* by which the ALMIGHTY had accepted them as *his children*, and had promised to be *their* God. But, can it ever be conceived, that the dispensation of JESUS CHRIST is *defective* in this important point! That it, herein, comes behind, and is inferior to both the former! That it has no such *standing token* of God's mercy to condemned Infants, nor *any rite* by which he visibly admits them *now*, as he *formerly* did, into his family or church!—Is he a God *in covenant* to the *Abrahamic*, and to the *Jewish* Infants ONLY, and not to CHRISTIAN Infants also? With great assurance we can say, to *Christian Infants* also (1).

And

(1) We are not to imagine, that all Infants dying such, but those of *believers*, or all which die unbaptized, will be *annihilated* or never rise again: but the superior advantage to *believers* Infants, above others, is, 1. That with respect to *these*, God has been pleased to lay himself under a more particular *covenant* or *promise* of a resurrection to a future happiness; whereas the other

And as it thus evidently appears, that, in the original construction and frame of *his church*, provision was made that the Infants of God's *people* should be admitted into his *covenant*. So, it may be added—that such a *solemn dedication*, as is made in Baptism, of an Infant by its parents to God the SUPREAM PARENT, seems to be a most *natural* and *rational* service: a service which a pious mind can scarce possibly forbear. Having received so great a gift and trust from the *almighty sovereign*, how natural and proper is it, that soon upon its birth, and while a sense of the obligation is yet warm upon the heart, he should make some *solemn acknowledgment* that he has received it from God; should *openly* devote it to him, and lay himself under a *sacred vow* to educate it religiously, and bring it up in his fear! Is not this, evidently, a becoming

other are left more to his *uncovenanted mercy*. And 2. Their circumstances in a *future state* may agreeably to all the moral perfections of God, be supposed more *happy* and *advantageous* than theirs who were never thus *solemnly devoted* to him. It being an evident and important part of the scheme of God's moral government, that great blessings and favours shall be conferred upon *some*, in consequence and as a reward of the earnest and sincere prayers and piety of *others*.

All *rational* creatures, there is reason to believe, are, some where or other, placed in a state of *discipline* or *probation*; before they pass into a state of *fixed* and *unalterable* bliss. *Heaven* itself was, if it be not at present, a *state of trial* to Angels. *Infants* dying such, therefore, there is ground to presume, pass into such a state. Now, as in our present *state of trial*, some are placed in circumstances far more advantageous and favourable than others: so, probably, is it in the state to which *dying Infants* pass. *Abraham's* posterity were put in circumstances more favourable, for attaining *virtue* and *happiness*, than other nations of the earth, on account of their *father's* piety. The same may be justly hoped as to the dying Infants of good men; who, according to God's command, have been *solemnly devoted* to him, whom he hath acknowledged for *his children*, and to whom he hath, by a sacred covenant, *promised to be a God*.

ing *temper* and *action*, upon receiving such a trust? Would it not naturally have a good influence on the conduct of the parent, with regard to his child; disposing him either to *resign it* more chearfully, if taken from him by death; or to *train it up* more religiously if its life be continued? And might it not be hoped, that God would graciously accept and reward the piety of such a parent, with *peculiar blessings* on such a child?


But, from this *general view* of the several dispensations of religion with respect to *Infants*, from which their right to *Baptism* may be strongly *presumed*.—We proceed farther to establish it by clear and direct proofs.





ARGUMENT I.

The *first argument* shall be presented under the following *propositions*.

I.  T is an *incontestible fact*, that the INFANTS of *believers*, were, in former dispensations or ages of the church, taken together with their parents *into covenant with God*; and had, by his express command, a *sacrament* or *rite* given them, as a *token* that JEHOVAH was *their God*; and that in consequence hereof; HE counted them for HIS *children*, and as standing in a *peculiar relation* to himself. Gen. xvii. 7, 10, 11, 12. Deut. xxix. 10, 11, 12. Ezek. xvi. 20, 21. See these scriptures already cited, pag. 4, 6.

II. When these INFANTS of *believers* were thus *taken into COVENANT*, it was certainly, a *great PRIVILEGE*, a *favour* or *grant* most thankfully to be received.

For, by this *token*, the MOST HIGH obliged himself and covenanted to be THE GOD of *that Infant*. And what *that* implies, see before explained, pag. 4, 5. Now

III. If this *great PRIVILEGE* was once *granted* by GOD to his church, it is a *privilege* STILL *subsisting*,

sisting, and is now in *actual* and *full* force, if it has not been *revoked*. But

IV. This privilege or grant has NEVER *been* REVOKED. No such *revocation*, nor any shadow of it, appears in the whole *book* of GOD. Therefore

V. The INFANTS of *believers* having STILL a right to their *antient* UNREPEALED *privilege*, of being admitted with their parents into covenant with GOD, and of having *its token* applied to them ; it hence necessarily follows, that they have right to *Christian Baptism* ; for *Baptism* is now the ONLY appointed *token* or ceremony of admission.

These propositions, it is humbly apprehended, amount to a *demonstration* of the point in debate. Which of them can be denied ? Will any man say.
1. That the *Infant of believers*, in the former ages of the church, *were not* taken, with their parents into covenant with GOD ; *had not*, by his express command, a *sacrament* or *rite* given them in token that JEHOVAH was *their* GOD ; and that, in consequence of this, they *were not* considered and treated as being in a *peculiar manner* HIS ? This no man will affirm. Will it then be said, 2. That *this*, though it was granted to the *Infants* of good men of old, was really *no privilege* nor *favour* to them ? Neither durst any man assert *this*. Can it be urged then, 3. That this privilege, though granted *antiently* to the church, and enjoyed by it *many ages*, does not, now, continue to it ; nor ought, now, to be enjoyed by it ; though it be at the same time acknowledged not to have been *repealed* ? Absurd to imagine ! Will it be said then, 4. That this *antient privilege* or *grant* has, indeed, been *repealed* ? Let the REPEAL be shewn, and
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the point shall be given up. There appears no such REPEAL, nor any thing like it, in the whole sacred scriptures: on the contrary, there appear many things, as will presently be seen, abundantly to *confirm* this invaluable privilege; and to *strengthen* and *enlarge* it. And, indeed, it were the height of *absurdity* to imagine, that JESUS CHRIST came to *cut short* the privileges of the church, in any single point; and to cast the *children of believers* out of GOD's covenant, who *before* were taken into it.—

It being impossible to deny, then, that the *Infants of believers* have STILL a right to their *antient UNREPEALED privilege*, of being admitted with their parents into GOD's covenant, and of having *its token* applied to them.—The consequence is inevitable.—That they have then a right to *Baptism*, the *appointed token* of GOD's covenant, and the *only initiatory rite* by which persons are now admitted into it.

The point is farther proved thus.

A R G U M E N T II.

From the ABRAHAMIC COVENANT.

THE covenant which GOD made with *Abraham*, and with HIS SEED, Gen. xvii. (into which *his Infants* were taken, together with *himself*, by the rite of *circumcision*.) That covenant, I say, is the very SAME which WE are now under, even the *christian* or *gospel covenant*; and ABRAHAM, in that transaction, acted and is considered under the character of OUR FATHER, the *Father of us believing Gentiles*: the original grants, therefore, and pri-
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vileges

vileges of *that covenant* must necessarily belong to us, *believing Gentiles*, HIS SEED.—Now it was an indisputable grant or privilege of *that covenant*, that INFANTS should be received, together with their parents, into it; and solemnly pass under its *sacrament* or *seal*. This grant, therefore, or privilege, in behalf of *our INFANTS*, we, *believing Gentiles*, may now confidently claim.

That we, *believing Gentiles*, are *the SEED* really included and intended in *that covenant*; and that *Abraham*, in that transaction, was considered as OUR FATHER—is a point actually, and most clearly, determined by *St. Paul*. For in *two* several epistles (*Rom. iv.* and *Galat. iii.*) where he is explaining the nature and extent of the *christian* or *gospel covenant*, he quotes *this covenant* made with *Abraham* (*Gen. xvii.*) refers to it, and reasons from it, and fetches arguments thence to prove, that BELIEVERS from among the *Gentiles* are, under the *christian* dispensation, to be fellow-heirs with the *Jews*, and are the REAL SEED of *Abraham* intended in *that covenant*. See *Rom. iv. 9.*—particularly ver. 16, 17. Therefore IT (i. e. the blessedness, or justification, of the *Abrahamic covenant*) is of FAITH, that it might be by grace; to the end THE PROMISE might be sure to ALL THE SEED; not to that only which is of THE LAW, but to that also which is of the FAITH of *Abraham*, who is the FATHER OF US ALL, (i. e. of *believing Gentiles* as well as *Jews*,) as it is written (*Gen. xvii. 5.*) I have made thee a FATHER of MANY NATIONS.

Expressly to the same purpose, the *Apostle* also assures us, *Galat. iii. 7.* That they who ARE OF FAITH (Believers) the same are THE CHILDREN of *Abraham*. And ver. 29. If ye are CHRIST'S (i. e. Believers) then are ye ABRAHAM'S SEED, and heirs according to the promise. And again ver 16, 17.
that

that to Abraham, and to HIS SEED, were the promises made; (which SEED he proves to be all true believers, taken in a collective sense as the body of Christ; and adds); now this I say, that the covenant which was confirmed before of GOD in CHRIST; (εἰς χριστον respecting Christ, or true believers) the LAW, which was 430 years after CANNOT DISANNUL, that it should make the PROMISE of NO EFFECT.—Now that the promises, or covenant, here referred to, which the Apostle affirms to be STILL in force, and NOT to be disannulled, must be, and is this covenant, (Gen. xvii.) into which INFANTS were taken by a visible rite, is most evident; because, this is the ONLY covenant, in which GOD ever made and confirmed promises to Abraham and to his seed.

Seeing, then, it is incontestable—that we believing Gentiles, are THE SEED intended in that covenant; it follows, that we have an undoubted right to ALL its privileges and grants; consequently, to the admission of our INFANTS into it; and consequently, to their passing under its token or sign.

This token or sign was originally *circumcision*: but when GOD sent his son into the world further to explain and confirm *this covenant*, and to publish it to all nations, he was pleased to alter its token, or initiating rite, from *circumcision* to *Baptism*: partly, perhaps, as *circumcision* was a painful and bloody rite, and obnoxious to great reproach and contempt amongst the Gentiles; but, principally, because both sexes were now to be alike visibly received into the covenant; and under this new dispensation of it, there was to be neither male nor female. Galat. iii. 28. (m).

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Thus

(m) That *circumcision* is abolished, is acknowledged by all; but the *Abrahamic* covenant still subsisting, and being no other than

Thus then stands *the argument*, in short—if we are CHRIST's (Believers) *then are we Abraham's SEED*, (Gal. iii. 29.) but, if we are *Abraham's SEED*, we have then a right to ALL *the grants and privileges* of that covenant which God made with *Abraham*, and with HIS SEED: but the ADMISION of his INFANTS, together with *himself*, was an indisputable *grant or privilege* of that covenant: therefore, as it was given to *Abraham* OUR FATHER, it must necessarily remain and endure to US HIS SEED (n).

A R G U M E N T III.

From the COMMISSION.

A *Third* argument for admitting *Infants to Baptism*, may be drawn—from *the sense* in which the APOSTLES, when sent forth to baptise, would naturally and even necessarily understand their *commission*. GO TEACH (*μαθητεύσατε* disciple or professyte)

than the *gospel* covenant, and of this *gospel* covenant it being acknowledged that *Baptism* is now the appointed *token or sign*; it hence evidently follows, that *Baptism* now succeeds in the room of *circumcision*. Accordingly it is called the *christian* circumcision, or *circumcision of Christ*. Col. ii. 11, 12.

(n) Infants are not baptised as being THEMSELVES the *Seed of Abraham*; but as being the *Children*, or *Property*, of those who are the *Seed of Abraham*. For as *Abraham's Faith* brought not *himself* only, but his *Infants* together with him, into the *Covenant of God*: So the *Faith of Abraham's Seed* (Believers) brings not *themselves* only, but *their Infants* together with them, into the *SAME Covenant*: else the *Covenant* would not be established in the same manner to *his Seed*, as it was to *Abraham* himself; which yet is plainly promised, Gen. xvii. 7, 10, 11.

lyte) ALL NATIONS BAPTIZING THEM (o). It is now enquired, *in what sense* they would understand this *commission*? Whether, as authorizing them to baptise only the *believing adult*: or, to give this token of God's covenant *also* to the INFANTS of such believers? The *commission* is delivered in such *general terms* as not *certainly* to determine this. If any part of it can be said to *exclude* Infants, it must be the word *teach* (p). But suppose it had been said—*go teach, proselyte, all nations CIRCUMCISING them.*—Would not *the Apostles*, without any farther warrant, have naturally and justly thought, that upon proselyting the *Gentile parent* and circumcising him, his INFANTS *also* were to be circumcised? Or, if a divine command had been given to the *twelve patriarchs* of old, to go into *Egypt, Arabia, &c.* and *TEACH them the GOD of Abraham, circumcising them.*—Would they not, must they not, have understood it as authorizing them to perform this ceremony, not upon the *parent* only, but also upon the INFANTS of such as believed in the *GOD of Abraham*? Without all question they would.

Hence then it is plain, that the word, *teach*, (disciple or proselyte) concludes nothing, *certainly*, against INFANTS *being admitted*, with their believing parents, into God's covenant by Baptism. But, if the word, *teach*, does not necessarily *EXCLUDE Infants*; let us see, whether there are not such *circumstances* attending this *commission*, as would naturally and even necessarily lead *the Apostles*

(o) Mat. xxviii. 19.

(p) The word rendered *teach* (μαθητεύσατε) in the 19th verse, is not *the same* with that in the next verse, *teaching them to observe all things*—(διδασκόντες) but is of a more *large* and *comprehensive* signification, and is better rendered to *proselyte* or *disciple*.

bles to apprehend INFANTS to be *actually* INCLUDED therein.

Now, here let it be considered—who the persons were, to whom the *commission* was given? They were JEWS; *men*, who had been educated in the knowledge of that covenant, which GOD had made with *Abraham* and their *fathers*; and who knew it to be STILL *in force*.—*Men*, who had seen, that in all covenant-transactions, betwixt GOD and *his church*, the INFANTS of *believers* had *always* been admitted, together with *their parents*, and passed under the same *initiating rite*.—*Men*, who apprehended this *their admission* to be a great privilege or favour to them; and knew, or were to be soon informed, that the *Gentiles* (*all nations*) were now to be taken into a *joint-participation* of ALL the privileges of the *Jewish church*; to be grafted into the *same olive-tree*; and to be *joint-heirs* with them of ALL their *religious* immunities or grants.—They, moreover, knew it to be the *constant, immemorial practice* of the church, that when any *Gentile was taught* (*profelyted* to the worship of the GOD of *Israel*) himself *was baptised*, and *all his Infants* were baptised with him, and these Infants were called *profelytes*. Further, they were *men* extremely *jealous* and *tenacious* of their antient rites.—They had seen also, under their *law*, by GOD's express command, *children of a month old* and upwards enrolled in the temple register; and entered, as ministers to AARON, as *doing the service of the tabernacle*, and as *keeping the charge of the sanctuary* (p).—They had been, often, *witnesses* to the kind regard their master had shewn to *little children*; and had been once severely rebuked by him for hindering their
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(p) Numb. iii. 6, 7, 8, 28. And claimed by GOD as HIS SERVANTS. Levit. xxv. 41, 42.

being brought to receive his benediction ; and saw him *laying his hands on them*, and solemnly declaring them to be *subjects of his kingdom*.—Further, they knew that *Baptism* was appointed as a *token* from God of the *remission of sin*, or of *justification* ; and that *Infants* were in the eye of the christian law *treated as sinners*, and under a *sentence of condemnation*.—Finally: they knew that CHRIST came, not to *lessen* or *abridge* the privileges of GOD's church (of which this *admission* of Infants was confessedly one) but to *heighten* and to *enlarge* them.—Let these several *circumstances* be impartially weighed, and then let any man say—whether, as the *commission* will admit of a favourable and a large sense, so as to *include* Infants, the apostles would not *naturally*, and even *necessarily*, suppose them *comprehended* therein? And whether, there was not a most strong, and most manifest *necessity*, if CHRIST intended that Infants should *not* be included in it, that he should have expressly *excepted* them?

The *commission* viewed in *this*, which is its proper and true *light*, is so far from concluding any thing *against* the baptizing Infants, that it strongly favours and supports it. For since, it is delivered in such *general* terms as to be *capable* of admitting Infants; and since, from the *above circumstances*, the apostles would naturally and unavoidably understand it as intending their *admission*; it follows, that our LORD's *silence*, as to *these*, is a strong and most manifest presumption in their favour; and that his not *excluding*, or *excepting*, them from the *christian covenant*, is, in all equitable construction, a *permission* or *order* that they should be *admitted* into it.

A R G U M E N T IV.

Shall be drawn, from the EVIDENT AND CLEAR CONSEQUENCES of other passages of SCRIPTURE.

I. **I**N *Rom. xi. the Apostle*, discoursing of the exclusion of a chief part of *the Jews* from the *visible church* of GOD, and the reception of *the Gentiles* in their stead; speaks of it under this figure, ver. 17. *And if some of the branches (the Jews) be broken off, and thou (a Gentile) being a wild olive-tree, wer't grafted in amongst them, and WITH THEM partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not, &c.* Here let it be noted. 1. *The olive-tree*, is the *ABRAHAMIC covenant or church*; from which, the *unbelieving Jews* are cast out; and into which, the *believing Gentiles* are taken in their stead. 2. *The root and fatness* of this olive-tree, of which the *ingrafted branches* partake, are the religious *privileges or grants*, belonging to that covenant or church. Now 3. It was a very *valuable and indisputable* privilege of that covenant, that the faith of a *parent* grafted *his children*, together with *himself* into that *olive-tree*, i. e. admitted them into *the church*, or into a *covenant-relation* to GOD. Therefore 4. The *unbelieving JEW* being cut off from this root, and the *believing GENTILE* succeeding, and being grafted into his room, and partaking *jointly* with the *natural branches* of *ALL* their church-privileges, immunities, and grants, he must undoubtedly partake of *THIS privilege* too.

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What part of this argument can possibly be denied? Will it be said—that the faith of a parent *did not graft* his CHILDREN, together with himself, into the *visible church*, before the coming of CHRIST? No—Or, that *this* was not a *privilege*? No—Can it be urged then, that *believing GENTILES* are not now taken in to be Συγκοινωνοὶ τῆς ρίζης JOINT-PARTAKERS of the root (r), i. e. of the church-privileges and grants which the *unbelieving Jew* hath lost? This were highly absurd: for they are expressly declared, by the apostle (s), to be Συγκληρονόμοι FELLOW-HEIRS; Συσσωμα of the SAME BODY; and Συμετοχοὶ τῆς ἐπαγγελίας JOINT-PARTAKERS of the promise.

The argument, then, most clearly and strongly concludes for the *visible admission* of the Infants of *believing GENTILES*, together with themselves, into the covenant and church of GOD. Is he the GOD of the Jews only? Is he not also of the GENTILES? A GOD, in the same manner, in the same latitude and extent, to us, as he was to THEM? Yes; he is, undoubtedly, thus a GOD to *believing GENTILES* also. Accordingly *Isaiab*, speaking of the *Christian dispensation*, or the state of the church under the MESSIAH, says, that not only *believers* should be esteemed the seed of the blessed of the Lord, (or the blessed seed of the Lord) but also, THEIR OFFSPRING together with them (t).

II. From our Saviour's own words, Mark x. 14. Suffer the LITTLE CHILDREN to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of GOD. And John iii. 5. Except any one (Tis) is born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of GOD. From these two passages, I say, put together,

gether, the right of *Infants* to Baptism may be also clearly inferred. For *in one*, they are declared actually to *have a place in God's kingdom or church*; and yet into *this kingdom or church*, *the other*, as expressly says, *NONE can be admitted without being baptised.*

The *kingdom of God*, in the gospel, denotes, either the *visible church* on earth; or the *invisible one* in heaven. Answerable to these, there is a two-fold *regeneration*, namely, a being *born again of water* (*i. e.* baptised, which is therefore called the *washing of regeneration*, Tit. iii. 5.) which admits into the *visible church*; and, a being *born again of the spirit* (called the *renewing of the Holy Ghost*;) which admits into the *invisible*. Now, in which soever of these senses the expression is here taken, it strongly concludes for the *Baptism of INFANTS*. For

1. If, by the *kingdom of God*, be meant the *visible church* on earth; our LORD, by saying of *such is the kingdom*, declares that *Infants* are to be considered as having a place in *this kingdom*, *i. e.* as being members of that *body, society, or church*, which he, as MESSIAH, came to rule and to save. But, if they are to be considered as a part of *this kingdom*, or *visible church*, they are, then, *to be baptised, or born again of water*, for *this* is the *only appointed rite of entering into it*. Or

2. If, by the *kingdom of God*, we understand the *invisible church* in heaven; into *that INFANTS* cannot enter, except they are *born again of the spirit*, *i. e.* regenerated, quickened, and raised from the dead (u). But, if they are capable and proper sub-

(u) A *resurrection* from the dead is frequently spoken of in scripture as a being *born again*, or a *regeneration*. Vid. Rom. i. 4. Luke xx. 36. Mat. xix. 28. Acts xiii. 33. Rom. viii. 29. Col. i. 18. Heb. i.

subjects of a *regeneration by the SPIRIT*, they must be also of *Baptism*; for the *baptismal water* is nothing else but the appointed *token* or *emblem* of this regenerating *spirit*. Seeing then, that God grants them the *thing signified*, viz. the *renewing of the Holy Ghost*; it can never be thought his will, that the *sign* or *token* be denied them, viz. the *washing of regeneration*, or *Baptism*.

The argument, then, is conclusive, in whatever sense we take, the *kingdom of God*. For our LORD having, in one place, declared *that the LITTLE CHILDREN should be brought to him, because of SUCH is the KINGDOM*: and in another, *that except any one is born of water*, baptised, *he cannot enter into this KINGDOM*—it most evidently follows—that *Infants* are *capable* of being *born again of water*, or baptised; because, else, they *could not enter* into this kingdom, into which our LORD here expressly declares, they *do enter*, and are *admitted* (w).

It cannot be here said—that the words of *SUCH*—are to be understood, not of *Infants in years*, but of persons of a *childlike* and *humble disposition*. Because, this would represent our LORD's conduct as extremely *absurd*. For, why should he be *very angry* with his disciples, for forbidding *Infants in years* to be brought to him, because of *grown per-*

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(w) The words, *John iii. 5.* thus interpreted, are a very pertinent and just rebuke of *Nicodemus's* cowardice. It is as though our Lord had said—"Except you have the *courage* to profess openly my religion, signified by your submission to the ceremony of *Baptism*, you cannot be a member of my *visible* church on earth: and, notwithstanding your *descent* from *Abraham*, if you are not born of an *higher* principle, even of the *spirit*, or *Holy Ghost*; your *mind* will be never raised to that state of purity and moral rectitude, nor your *body* to that incorruptibility, spirituality and life, which is necessary to your admission into my *invisible* kingdom in heaven."

sions of an humble disposition his kingdom consisted? There is no just connection betwixt his great displeasure at them for keeping *Infants* from him; and his giving, as the reason of it, that to quite different subjects, meek and humble persons, his kingdom belonged. According to this interpretation, our LORD might rationally have done the same, had *lambs* or *doves* been going to be presented to him; he might have been very angry with those who should have forbid them, and have said—*suffer them to be brought, for OF SUCH, i. e. of persons of a meek and harmless temper, is the kingdom of God* (x).

Finally: let it be added—that as our LORD took these *INFANTS* into his arms, laid his hands upon and blessed them; it hence appears—that *Infants* are CAPABLE of the divine influence, benediction, and the operations of the HOLY SPIRIT. Now what are these, but the very things principally intended to be represented by the *baptismal water*? Though our LORD did not pour water on them, putting up a prayer for them; he performed a religious ceremony on them equally solemn, and of much, (perhaps, exactly) the same purport; he laid his hands upon them, and prayed; which was an act of religious worship hardly at all differing from baptising them with water. Yea, it was a far greater thing for the savior of the world to take up *Infants* in his arms and solemnly to bless them, than for any minister now to baptise them with water in his name. Further

III. It is also very worthy to be observed—that the *Christian* dispensation, as well as the *Jewish*, makes

(x) Dr. Gale, therefore, ingenuously owns, that *this passage* is to be understood of *Infants in years*. Reflections, &c. pag.

makes an evident *distinction* betwixt the *children of believers* and the *children of Infidels*.

Several of the *Corinthian* converts having unbelieving yoke-fellows, doubted of the lawfulness of cohabiting with them; and seemed to think themselves obliged to *separate*; lest the *offspring* of such unequal marriages should be deemed *impure* and *unmeet* to be taken into covenant with God. This their doubt seemed to be just, and to carry in it great weight; being grounded on the known conduct of *Ezra*, and the *Jewish elders*, in a parallel case. See *Ezra* x. 1, 2, 3. But the *apostle* resolves it, by telling them—that the unbelieving yoke-fellow was so far *sanctified* by (or to, or because of) the believing, as that their children which would otherwise be *UNCLEAN*, are now *HOLY* (y). Here then we see a most clear and evident *distinction* made betwixt the *children of believers* and the *children of infidels*: the one are *UNCLEAN*, *i. e.* do not stand in any visible covenant relation to *JEHOVAH*, and the other are *holy*, *i. e.* in the same sense *holy*, as the *Jews* were an *holy nation*, taken into a peculiar relation to God (z).

These *several scriptures* being impartially weighed, the *propriety* and *fitness* of bringing children to Baptism seems to be established beyond all rational doubt. As a conclusion of this argument I beg leave to ask—Must not the *CHRISTIAN dispensation* be allowed, in all things, to have the preference, and to be *better* than the *JEWISH*? But, if it *EXCLUDES* our *Infants* from the covenant of God, and

(y) 1 Cor. vii. 14.

(z) This sentiment, of an Infant's *Holiness*, on account of its solemn dedication to God, was perfectly scriptural and rational; as well as quite suitable to the custom and language of those times. As appears from *Luke* ii. 22, 23. where it is said, that, according to the standing usage, they brought the Infant *JESUS* to the Temple; to PRESENT HIM to the Lord: As it is written in the Law, Every first-born male shall be HOLY to the Lord.

and from standing in any *federal relation* to heaven ; then here is *one*, and that a very important and considerable instance in which it is vastly *inferior*. Now, had *this* really been the case, how mighty and just a *prejudice* would it have raised in the *Jews* against CHRISTIANITY ! What *complaints* and *objections* should we, doubtless, have heard them making against this new dispensation, as *casting their CHILDREN out of GOD'S COVENANT*, and putting them upon a *level with those of Infidels and Pagans* ! But, as amongst their many and loud *cavils* at the religion of CHRIST, and the continued oppositions and reproaches of the *Judaizers*, we find not the least shadow of a *complaint* of this kind, it may with great assurance be concluded, there was no such occasion given ; but that CHRISTIANITY, as it found, so it continued and confirmed, the INFANTS of good men *in the covenant of God*.

Having proceeded thus far in the argument ; I beg leave here to recapitulate, and sum up the force of what has been offered, in the following *queries* ; which will soon lead a fair enquirer to an *easie* issue of the debate.

Query I. Are not *Infants*, in the eye or construction of the *Christian law*, under a *sentence of condemnation*, and treated as *sinners* ?

Query II. Are they not, consequently, in the eye of that law, capable of *justification* and of being treated as *righteous* ?

Query III. If, then, they are *capable* of justification and remission, is it not most highly *reasonable* and even *necessary* to suppose that the CHRISTIAN law, which is a manifestation of GOD'S richest mercy to mankind, has made *provision* for it, and given some *token* of it ?

Query

Query IV. Were not the Infants of believers taken into covenant with God; and did they not stand in a more *immediate relation* to him, than the Infants of unbelieving *Canaanites, Moabites, &c.* both under the *Abrahamic* and *Mosaic* dispensations?—And was not this a peculiar *honour* and *advantage* to these Infants?

Query V. Are not the Infants of us, *Christians*, as capable of this favour, viz. of being taken visibly into God's covenant, as their (the *Israelites*) Infants were: but if ours ARE NOT; is not, here an important *circumstance* in which both the *Abrahamic* and *Mosaic* dispensations were more favourable to mankind, and manifested GREATER GRACE than the dispensation of JESUS CHRIST?—But can this possibly be?

Query VI. Are not the Infants of CHRISTIANS (who are now an *holy priesthood*, and who succeed to all the privileges of the *Jewish church*) are not, I say, *their* Infants as capable *τὸ μαθητευεῖσθαι* of being *discipled*; as the Infants of the *Jewish priesthood* were, of being *enrolled* in the temple register, and entered as *ministers to Aaron*, and as *φυλασσόντες τὰς φυλάκας τῶν ἁγίων* keeping the charge of the sanctuary (a): and are not Infants as capable, under the *Christian* covenant, of being baptised as they were of circumcision both under the *Abrahamic* and *Mosaic*?

Let the *scriptures*, then, interpret themselves; and one part of the divine *dispensation* be suffered to explain the other (of which *other*, it was intended to be a *figure* or *type*) and we shall find it perfectly agreeable, to the *analogy* and *stile* of scripture, as well as to the *reason* of things, that *Infants* should be admitted as members of the *Christian* church, and are therefore included in the *commission* to baptise.

ARGU-

(.) Vid. Numb. iii. 6, 7, 8, 28.

A R G U M E N T V.

From APOSTOLIC TRADITION.

THE *Baptism of Infants* was the undoubted practice of the Christian church, in its purest and first ages; the ages immediately succeeding the Apostles; who could not but know what the APOSTOLIC doctrine and practice was as to this matter.

This, I apprehend, to be an argument of great weight. For the enquiry being about a FACT, which could not but be publicly and perfectly known, and not possible to be mistaken, in the ages immediately succeeding the Apostles; the sense of those ages, concerning this fact, must needs be of great moment in deciding the point. — Whether the APOSTLES and EVANGELISTS formed the first churches, throughout the whole world, upon the plan of INFANT-BAPTISM; or NOT; that is to say, whether they admitted Infants, together with their believing parents, into the church by Baptism; or did NOT so admit them, was a fact of such nature as could not but be evident, and indubitably known, to ALL the Christians of the first age. Nor was it, humanly speaking, possible that the APOSTOLIC practice in this point should be UNIVER-SALLY departed from, disused and thrown out, in so short a space of time, as we shall presently see the Baptism of INFANTS to have UNIVERSALLY prevailed. To prepare the way to this proof, I beg leave to premise these two things.

1. To weaken the testimony of the *antient writers* and *fathers* upon this point, some have objected the many foolish and absurd *opinions* and *interpretations* of scripture with which their writings abound. But this is extremely weak. For they are not here appealed to as *reasoners*, or *interpreters*, but only as *historians* or *witnesses* to a public *standing* FACT.

2. If any think it strange, that we have *no more* express testimonies to this practice of the church, in the writings of *these fathers*, let him to consider. — That the far greater part of their writings are lost; and that it is but little more than their names and a few pieces of their works, especially as to the *first age*, that are transmitted down to us. — And also, that the Baptism of *Infants* being then *universally practised*, and no doubts or dispute having ever been moved about it; and it being likewise the constant ever-prevailing custom of all the enemies of *Christianity*, both *Jews* and *Pagans*, to admit *Infants* to a participation of their *religious ceremonies and rites* together with their parents. These things considered, it will not appear strange that this point is so *rarely* touched on in the writings of those times. There are a thousand religious books written in the *present age*, in which the least hint is not to be found about *baptising of Infants*, though the point has now been so *long* and so *warmly* controverted amongst us: much less, then, should one expect to find any thing but a *few allusions* and *hints* as to this matter, in the books of those *early times*.

This being premised, we proceed to the *testimonies*. The *first* shall be from

JUSTIN MARTYR, who wrote about *forty years* after the *Apostolic age*. He says “ και πολλοι τινες
“ και πολλοι εξηκουσεται, η εδωκεται ταις οι εκ παιδων
“ εμαρτητησαν τω χριστω.” — “ *Several persons among*

“ us, both men and women, of sixty or seventy years
 “ old, who were proselyted, or made disciples, to
 “ CHRIST in, or from, their infancy do continue un-
 “ corrupt (a).” Now, proselyted to CHRIST from
 their infancy, they could not be, without being,
 from their infancy, considered and treated as pro-
 selytes to CHRIST; that is, without being from
 their infancy baptised.—For whosoever ἐμαρτυρεῖτο
 τῷ Χριστῷ were *discipled or proselyted to CHRIST*, were
 by his express order, Mat. xxviii. 19. *to be baptised*.
 Note *seventy years* from JUSTIN carries us back,
 almost, into the *middle* of the APOSTOLIC age.

IRENÆUS, who wrote about *sixty seven years* af-
 ter the Apostles; and was born, it is said, some
 years before the death of *St. John*, says concerning
 CHRIST.—“ Omnes enim venit per semetipsum
 “ salvere; omnes inquam, qui per eum renascun-
 “ tur in Deum, INFANTES & parvulos & pueros
 “ & juvenes (b).”—“ That he came to save all per-
 “ sons by himself; all, I mean, who by him are rege-
 “ nerated, i. e. baptised, unto GOD, INFANTS and
 “ little ones, and youths and elder persons.”—That the
 word *renascor*, *regenerated*, in the writings of these
 antients, particularly of *Irenæus*, is most familiarly
 used to signify, *baptised*, see from a vast variety of
 instances proved, beyond all doubt, in *Dr. Wall's*
History of Infant Baptism. Vol. I. Chap. iii. § 2, 3.
 and *Defence* pag. 318, 324.—And that by IN-
 FANTS, are here meant, *Children*, before they
 come to the use of reason, is evident, not only as
these must necessarily be included in the ALL whom
 he came to save; but also because, after he had
 mentioned *Infants* and *others regenerated*, he runs
 over the several ranks of age again; but with this
 remarkable difference, that whereas he mentions
 the

(a) Just. Martyr. Apol. ii.

(b) Irenæus adv. Hæres lib. iii. cap. 39.

the benefit of CHRIST's example, as what was to be taken by each of the *other ranks*, viz. the *parvuli*, the *juvenes* and the *seniores*, he says no such thing concerning the *Infantes* Infants; for this reason, no doubt; viz. that *these only*, of all the mentioned ranks, were *incapable* of this benefit.

TERTULLIAN, who flourished about an hundred years after the Apostles, is the only person, among the antients, who advises to *defer* the Baptism of Infants, *except in cases of necessity* or in *danger of death*. But his advising to *defer* it, except in cases of *necessity*, is an incontestible proof that the *baptizing of Infants* was the *practice* of those times. And as he appears to be quite *singular* in this his advice; so, that he was extremely *whimsical* and *absurd* in his opinions on this, as well as several other points of religion, all who have read his works perfectly well know. For, upon the same grounds on which he recommends the *deferring* the Baptism of Infants, he advises also—"That unmarried persons should be kept off from this sacrament, who are likely to come into temptation; as well those who never were married, as those in widowhood; until they either marry, or be confirmed in continence. They who understand the weight of Baptism will rather dread the receiving of it, than the delaying of it (c)."

This is TERTULLIAN's reasoning upon the point; but we have nothing to do with *that*; all we cite him for is a voucher to an *antient fact*, to prove that *in his days Infants were baptised*. To this fact he bears incontestible witness. His saying—"Itaque pro cujusque personæ conditione, &c. Therefore according to every ones condition, disposition and also age, the delaying of Baptism is more profitable; especially in the case of children:" and his

F 2

asking

asking—" Quid festinat innocens ætas ad remissionem peccatorum? Quid enim necesse est, si non tam necesse sponsores etiam periculo ingeri."—" *Why does that innocent age make such haste to the remission of sins, i. e. to the laver of Baptism? What occasion is there, except in cases of necessity, that the sponsors or godfathers, be brought into danger (d)?*" These questions plainly prove the baptising of Infants to have been the practice of his days.

Note. There are some, who upon very probable grounds, understand these passages of *Tertullian* as relating *only* to the Baptism of the Infants of *HEATHEN* parents; which when they came into their power by *purchase, conquest, &c.* the *Christians* of those times were wont to baptise. And that it is *only* to delay the baptising of *such Infants* as these, which *Tertullian* advises, there is strong reason to believe.

Hitherto, we find this point, of *Infant Baptism*, but transiently touched on by these *early writers*: there having yet no *controversie* or *doubt* arisen in the church which might give occasion to their speaking more *expressly* concerning it. But about *this time*, there arose some dispute about *ORIGINAL SIN*, or the nature and degree of *that pollution* with which new-born Infants are tainted. Henceforward, therefore, we shall find more *direct* and *express* passages relating to their Baptism.

ORIGEN, about an *hundred and ten years* after the Apostles, speaking of the pollution which cleaves to Infants, saith,—“ Adde his etiam.—*Besides this also let it be considered; what is the reason, that whereas the Baptism of the church is given for the forgiveness, INFANTS also by the usage of the church are BAPTISED: when if there were*
nothing

“ nothing in INFANTS which wanted forgiveness and
“ mercy, the grace of BAPTISM would be needless to
“ them (e).”

And again, “ Parvuli baptizantur in remissio-
“ nem.”—“ INFANTS ARE BAPTISED for the
“ remission of sins. Of what Sins? Or when have they
“ sinned? Or how can any reason of the laver hold
“ good in their case; but according to that sense before
“ mentioned; none is free from pollution, though
“ his life be but the length of one day upon the
“ earth? And it is for that reason, because, by the
“ sacrament of Baptism the pollution of our birth is ta-
“ ken away, that INFANTS ARE BAPTISED (f).”

In another treatise he saith—“ Pro hoc & eccle-
“ sia.”—“ For this also it was, that the church had
“ from the Apostles a tradition, or order, TO GIVE
“ BAPTISM also to INFANTS. For they to whom
“ the divine mysteries were committed, knew that there
“ is in all persons the natural pollution of Sin, which
“ must be done away by water and the spirit (g).”

There are other passages of Origen, full to this point: but these, already cited, abundantly prove the Baptism of Infants to be the standing custom of his days. That they are genuine and authentic, see clearly shewn in Dr. Wall’s *History of Infant Baptism*, Vol. I. pag. 55.—and defence, pag. 372.

Note. ORIGEN was born, about eighty-five years after the age of the Apostles; and if baptised in Infancy (as there is no reason to question but he was, his father and grand father having both been Christians) here is clear proof of its practice very near the Apostolic age. Though he resided chiefly at Alexandria in Egypt, he had been conversant in almost all the noted churches of the world. His testi-
mony,

(e) Homil. viii. in Levit Cap. 12.

(f) Ibid. in Luc.

(g) Ibid. Comment. in Epist. Rom. L. 5.

ny, therefore, to the point may justly be supposed to speak the sense of them all (h).

We next proceed to CYPRIAN, who wrote about an *hundred and fifty* years after the Apostles; and gives, if it be possible, a yet more and indubitable testimony to *this fact*. In his time (*Anno Domini 253*) a council of *sixty-six* bishops being convened at *Carthage*; one *Fidus*, a country bishop, having entertained some doubt (not whether *Infants* should be *baptised at all*, but) whether *Baptism* might lawfully be given them, till they were *eight days old*, according to the law of *circumcision*? In answer to this doubt, they *unanimously* decreed—
 “ *That the baptism of Infants was not to be deferred till*
 “ *the eighth day.*”—And after many things spoken to the point they conclude thus—“ *Cæterum si*
 “ *homines impedire aliquid. But if any thing could*
 “ *binder men from Baptism, it will be heinous sins,*
 “ *which will debar the adult and mature therefrom.*
 “ *And if those who have sinned extremely, yet if after-*
 “ *ward they believe, are baptised, and no man is pro-*
 “ *hibited from this grace; how much more ought not*
 “ *AN INFANT to be prohibited; who, being BUT*
 “ *JUST BORN, is guilty of no sin, but of original*
 “ *which he contracted from ADAM.—Wherefore,*
 “ *dearly beloved, it is our opinion that from Baptism*
 “ *and the grace of God, who is kind and benign to all,*
 “ *none ought to be prohibited by us; which as it is to*
 “ *be observed with respect to ALL, so especially with*
 “ *respect to INFANTS, and those who are BUT*
 JUST

(h) The learned Dr. Gale, who with great acuteness had disputed the preceeding authorities (but whose objections have been abundantly answered by Dr. Wall) does not so much as pretend to contest those which follow, from Cyprian and Austin. These, therefore, being admitted as *incontestible* by our opponents; we shall see presently, the strength with which they conclude in our favour.

“ JUST BORN, *who deserve our help and the divine mercy* (i).”

Hence, then, it *incontestibly* appears, that the *Baptism of Infants* was the constant, established *practice* of the church at this time: inasmuch, as neither *the person* who proposed the doubt, nor any one of the *sixty-six bishops* who answer it, made the least question of the *Baptism of Infants*, but speak of it as a *thing* universally acknowledged and practised in the church.

Now, as this was but an *hundred and fifty years* after the *Apostles*; and some of these bishops may reasonably be supposed seventy or eighty years old; if they were baptised in *their infancy* (which can with no reason be doubted) it carries up the practice to within eighty years of the *Apostles* themselves. And at the time of *their infancy*, there were many alive who were born *within* the very age of the *Apostles*, and could not but *certainly* and *infalibly* know what the *APOSTOLIC practice* and *appointment* was to this matter.

THE CLEMENTINE CONSTITUTIONS (a book thought by some to be of very great antiquity; and by all acknowledged to be extant in the *fourth* or *fifth* century, and to contain a good account of the antient discipline and practice) have this express admonition “ Βαπτιστε δε υμων η̃ τα νηπια.”——
“ And BAPTISE YOUR INFANTS, and bring them
“ up in the nurture and admonition of GOD:” for he
says, “ Suffer the little children to come unto me, and
“ forbid them not.”

There are several other testimonies, from *Clement Alexandrinus*; quest. & respon. apud *Iust. Martyr*; *Greg. Nazian*; *Basil*; *Ambrose*; *Cbrysoftom*; and *Jerom*, most full to this purpose, to be seen in
Dr.

(i) Cyprian Epist. ad Fidum. Epist. 64.

Dr. Wall's *History of Infant Baptism*, too long to be here inserted; I shall further insist, only, upon a *very remarkable and decisive* one, from the writings of AUSTIN and PELAGIUS; about *three hundred and ten years* after the Apostles. I bring it not to prove *Baptism of INFANTS* to have been the *undoubted, universal* practice of the church in *their days*; (this would be quite needless, after the much earlier, and the *indisputable* evidence already produced from the council at *Carthage*, &c.) but, to shew it to have been the *constant* and *immemorial* practice from the *very beginning* of Christianity.

In his controversy with PELAGIUS, about *original sin*; to prove *Infants* to be tainted with it, AUSTIN frequently and with great triumph urges *their BAPTISM*; demanding — “*Why Infants are baptised for the remission of sin, if they have none?*” PELAGIUS seems exceedingly embarrassed by this argument (k); and every one sees, how much it concerned

(k) It is surprising, to see the shifts by which *Pelagius, Celestius*, and their followers, endeavour to evade the force of this argument. Sometimes they acknowledged *Infants* to have *actual sin*, and that their peevishness and froward temper is to be considered as such.—Sometimes, they urged, that *Infants* had *pre existed*; and it was for sins done in some former state, that they were brought to the baptismal laver.—Sometimes, they said, that they were not baptised for the *forgiveness of sin*; but that they may be made *heirs of the kingdom*.—Sometimes, that they were *baptised for forgiveness*; not that they had any sin; but that the uniformity of the words might be kept: or, because they were baptised into the church, where *forgiveness* was to be had; and with a sacrament, which had the means of *forgiveness* for those who wanted it. Vid. *Wall's history*, Vol. I. pag. 286.

To such extreme difficulties they thought themselves reduced, to reconcile their opinion with the *Baptism of Infants*. But, *these* had been all instantly removed, and the battery which so annoyed them been demolished at once, by only *denying* that *Infants* were to be baptised. Yet, so far are they from this, that

concerned him to DENY the *Baptism of Infants*, had there been any *possible* ground for it; and to do all that in him lay, to *invalidate* and *disprove* it. Had it been an *innovation*, a *departure* from the APOSTOLIC *practice*; it is impossible but so very learned and acute a person as *Pelagius*, who lived so near the *Apostles*, and had been *personally* conversant in some of the most noted churches of *Europe*, *Asia*, and *Africa*, must have been able to discover it, and both to have and to give at least some strong suspicion of it. But does the very sagacious *Pelagius* attempt any thing like this? No: so far from it, that some of his adversaries having drawn as a *consequence* of his opinion, *that Infants are not to be baptised*.—He warmly disclaims it, and with indignation complains.—“Se ab hominibus infamari quod
“neget parvulis Baptismi sacramentum. *That he*
“*had been slanderously represented by men, as denying*
“*the sacrament of Baptism to Infants.*” And adds
“Nunquam se, vel impium aliquem hæreticum,
“audisse qui hoc quod proposuit de parvulis di-

G

“ceret.”

that they seem not to have raised the least doubt of this kind. *Pelagius* owns, as above cited. And *Celestius* confesses, that Infants are to be baptised *according to the rule of the UNIVERSAL church*.

Note. *Pelagius* and *Celestius* were born, one in *Britain*, the other in *Ireland*; they lived a long time in *Rome*, the then center of the world, and reputed head of the church: they were both, for some time, at *Carthage*, in *Africa*; then, the one settled at *Jerusalem*; the other travelled through all the noted *Greek* and *Eastern* churches, in *Europe* and *Asia*. If there had, then, been any church, or number of churches, throughout the whole world, not only in that, but in the two preceeding ages, who denied the Baptism of Infants; it is impossible, but these two very learned and sagacious persons must have known, or heard of it: and that they would not have failed to take mighty advantage from it, to check the triumphs of their opponents; and to wrest from them this argument, by which, of all others, they were most grievously pressed.

“ceret.”—“*That he never heard, no not even any*
 “*impious Heretic, who would say that which he had*
 “*mentioned, viz. that unbaptised Infants are not*
 “*liable to the condemnation of the first man, and*
 “*that they are not to be cleansed by the regene-*
 “*ration of Baptism.*” And then proceeds—“*Quis*
 “*enim ita evangelicæ lectionis ignarus est, &c.*
 “*For who is so ignorant of that which is read in the*
 “*gospel as I do not say boldly to affirm, but even lightly*
 “*to suggest, or even to imagine such a thing? In a*
 “*word, who can be so impious, as to hinder INFANTS*
 “*from being BAPTISED and born again in CHRIST ;*
 “*and so make them miss of the kingdom of GOD ?*”

And having cited these words of our Saviour John iii. 5. *no one can enter into the kingdom of GOD, except he is born again of water and of the spirit*, he goes on—“*Quis ille tam impius est qui cujuscumque*
 “*ætatis parvulo.*”—“*Who is there so impious as to*
 “*refuse to an INFANT, of what age soever, the com-*
 “*mon redemption of mankind (l).*” AUSTIN also, re-
 citing the above-mentioned decision of the council at Carthage, which determines *that Infants are in no wise to be denied Baptism*, adds,—“*Non solum in*
 “*catholicâ ecclesiâ, verum etiam in qualibet he-*
 “*resi vel schismate constitutis, non memini me*
 “*aliud legisse.*”—“*That neither from such as were*
 “*of the catholic church, nor of such as belonged to any*
 “*sect or schism, whatsoever, he remembered not to*
 “*have read otherwise in any writer (m).*” i. e. of any
 who denied, that Infants were baptised upon the ac-
 count of original sin. “*This the church has ALWAYS*
 “*bad, has ALWAYS held (n).*”

THESE, now, are the evidence, on which we rest
 the ANTIQUITY of this fact; and by which we
 prove

(l) Austin. de peccato Origen. cap. 17, 18. (m) Ibid. de
 nat. & gratiâ. cap. 6. (n) Ibid. Serm. x. de verb. Apost.

prove the *Baptism of Infants* to have been *the practice* of the *Christian church*, from the *very beginning*. *Justin Martyr* about *forty years*; *Irenæus* about *sixty-seven*; and *Tertullian* about an *hundred years* after the *APOSTLES*, give plain intimations of its being the *Christian practice* in their times. From *Origen* an *hundred and ten years*; and from *Cyprian* and the synod of *sixty-six bishops*, *one hundred and fifty years* from the above date, we have *indisputable proof* of its being then the *established and standing usage* of the church. And *Austin* and *Pelagius*, about *three hundred and ten years* after the *Apostles* (though the latter was under the strongest *temptation*, and even *necessity* to deny the *Baptism of Infants*, had there been any possible ground for it) acknowledge, *that they never heard, nor read of any, whether true Christian, Heretic, or Schismatic, who denied Baptism to Infants*. This is the evidence: let us now argue from it.

1. ALL the churches, throughout the whole *Christian world*, were in the age of the *Apostles*, formed and established upon ONE and the SAME plan. That is to say, they ALL either baptised Infants; or else they ALL rejected them from Baptism. What the opinion, and the practice, of the *Apostles* was in this matter, (who were sent out into all the world to preach and establish churches) must be perfectly, universally, infallibly known; nor could it possibly be mistaken, by any one single church throughout the whole earth, during the *Apostolic age*. The *Corinthians*, for instance, the *Galatians*, the *Thessalonians*, &c. all perfectly knew, whether *Paul* and his companions, when they baptised and formed them into a church, baptised their INFANTS also; or else rejected them from Baptism. And

2. As to the age, immediately following the *Apostles*; it is impossible that THEY could be ig-

norant or mistaken as to this fact. They could not be in the *least doubt*, how their fathers had received and learnt from the *Apostles*, and practised as to this matter. For whether Infants *were*, or *were not*, then baptised; was so notorious and plain a *fact*, a *fact* of so public and conspicuous a nature, as could not possibly escape the knowledge of EVERY PARTICULAR CHRISTIAN, then living upon earth (o).

Now if ALL the churches throughout the world, were really established by the *Apostles* upon the plan of only ADULT Baptism; and they every where rejected INFANTS, and forbid them to be baptised; it will appear a thing absolutely *inconceivable*, and even a moral IMPOSSIBILITY, that the Baptism of Infants should so early, so widely, so universally prevail, throughout the whole world, as we have now seen it to have done.

For if the Baptism of Infants was *not* an APOSTOLIC institution and practice, how must the persons, who first attempted to introduce it, be received? Would not all their neighbour Christians immediately cry out upon the *innovation*, and demand;—"By what authority do you presume to perform this quite NEW; this unheard of and strange ceremony of baptising an Infant!"—Suppose them to have urged, in support of their practice, the same scriptures with us; would it not have

(o) With whatever credulity as to MIRACLES, said to be wrought in their days, these early writers may be charged; it cannot at all affect their evidence as to the fact, here, in debate. For, as there was no possibility of their being themselves deceived as to this matter; so neither could they be under temptation to falsify in their accounts of it. Nor indeed, had the temptation been ever so strong, could they have ventured to falsify in a fact notorious to all the world; and when every Christian then living could have stepped forth, and born witness to the falsehood of their account.

have presently been replied upon them with unanswerable strength?—"But did not the *Apostles* and *first preachers* of christianity understand the true sense and force of these scriptures? Yet not one of them all, nor any one of their followers, ever baptised an Infant, as we all perfectly know, and as you cannot but own. Look into all the churches throughout the whole earth, into *Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Greece, Italy, Africk, Spain, &c.* and you will find there *never was* such a thing known, nor heard of amongst *Christians*, as baptising an Infant."

WHAT! I greatly wonder, could the *first baptisers of Infants* possibly reply? Could they urge that it was an *apostolic* injunction and practice? No: the whole Christian world would have rose up against them, and born witness to the falshood of such a pretence. Could they hope then to establish this *invention* of their own; yea, was it *actually established*, in direct opposition to the *Apostles* authority, and to their *then* perfectly well-known institution and practice?—Impossible to imagine!

What then! I ask again, could the *first baptisers of Infants* urge in favour of their practice? Or how was it possible, it should *be received*, yea *prevail*, yea so *universally* prevail, that the very learned and acute *Pelagius* about *three hundred* years after, never heard of a church amongst either *Catholics* or *Hérètics*, who did not baptise Infants, if *ALL the churches* in the world were constituted by the *Apostles* upon the directly opposite plan? Yea, and when the persons who first began this practice could not but own, that the authority and example of *ALL the Apostles*, and of *ALL the primitive Christians*, and of *ALL the churches* in the world were absolutely against them?

Well; but suppose a *few persons* were of so odd a turn of mind, as to run into this quite novel and unheard

unheard of practice, of *baptising* INFANTS; can it be imagined that *whole churches* would be led blindly away after them? Or, if whole churches might be thus *seduced*; could *whole nations* be so too? Yea, if whole nations might; can it enter into the heart of any reasonable man, that ALL THE NATIONS of the *Christian* world, both *the eastern* and *the western* churches, in the space of about *two hundred* years, *universally* fell in with this *anti-apostolic* and *new-invented* rite of worship: and so strangely *apostatized* from the primitive and pure doctrine of CHRIST as to this matter! It were the height of absurdity even to surmise such a thing.

The *extravagance* of the supposition is moreover, mightily increased, by remembering—that a vast number of *sects* and *heresies* sprung up, and the Christian church was rent into many angry and contending parties, during *these times* (p). In the *second* century, or the age immediately following the apostles, there were those who took their names from *Cerintbus*, *Ebion*, *Valentinus*, *Carpocrates*, *Marcion*, *Montanus*; and the whole church was rent into two furious and angry sects, the *eastern* and the *western*, by the controversy about *easter*. In the *third* century there arose *Novatian*, *Sabellius*, *Paulus Samosatensis*, *Manes*, &c. with their followers. In the *fourth*, the *Meletians*, *Arians*, *Albanasians*, &c. Now these *several* inflamed parties, into which by divine permission, the church was then divided, were watchful and severe spies upon each others conduct: so that if any of them had *innovated* in this matter, of *baptising* Infants, how readily would *the rest* have entered their protest against it, and exclaimed loudly upon the *innovation*? But, it seems, so far were they from this; that however mutually in-

(p) No less than NINETY different *heresies* are said to have sprung up in the three first centuries.

inflamed and angry as to *other* points; yet, laying aside their animosity, they all surprisingly agree, in the affair of *baptising Infants*, to depart from the *apostolic* practice; and by an unaccountable *confederacy* connive at one another in this dangerous superstition.—Strange! beyond all belief! That amidst their many mutual accusations, reproaches, complaints, we meet not, in all antiquity, with *one* upon this head; and not a man, *Catholic* nor *Heretic*, dropping a single word against this gross innovation; except, perhaps, *Tertullian*; and he not absolutely, (if at all) censuring it; and supporting his dislike of it, by reasons which are no strength, but a dishonour to any cause.

For an *hundred years* after the death of the APOSTLES, *their* authority was sufficient, our brethren acknowledge, to keep such an *innovation* from entering the church. They therefore usually place the *introduction* of this practice about the beginning of the *third* century. But behold! in the short space of about *two hundred* years more; without a single *precept* to warrant, or a single *example* to encourage it, yea with the well-known practice of the APOSTLES themselves, and of *ALL the churches* they ever planted throughout the whole world, confessedly, openly, directly *against it*; under all these disadvantages, the *Baptism of Infants*, it seems, so EVERY WHERE prevailed, that upon the face of the whole earth there was not a church found where it was not performed!—To him that believes this, what can be incredible!

Some, perhaps, to evade the force of the foregoing argument, may object—“ There have been
“ *other* great corruptions, such as *image-worship*,
“ *transubstantiation*, &c. which have alike *universally*
“ prevailed in the church.” But the answer is extremely obvious. 1. This is far from being *true*;
nay

may it is entirely without foundation. Neither image-worship, nor transubstantiation, ever *universally* prevailed. The latter has by the *greater part* of the Christian church been in all times rejected as it is at this day : and though the *former*, since the *seventh* century, has spread itself wide, and too *generally* prevailed ; yet it was not without mighty *struggles* and *oppositions* in the church : numerous *synods* of bishops zealously declared against it : solemn decrees of *councils*, not in one kingdom or church only, but in diverse regions of the earth, publicly *condemned* it : the arm both of *civil* and *military* power was strenuously exerted to establish and support it : grievous persecutions were raised upon its account : and many testified their abhorrence of it by bitter sufferings, and death itself.— And is *this* a case at all parallel to that of *Infant-Baptism*, which we have now been considering ? The most prejudiced judgment must confess it is not. Besides

2. Had *these corruptions*, indeed, as *universally* prevailed, as *Infant-Baptism* ever did ; yet would this, by no means, have put them upon an equal foot with *that* ; or have made the cases at all *parallel*. For, when the *Bishop of Rome* had claimed and was acknowledged to be the *infallible head*, the *supreme pastor* of the church, the *vicar of CHRIST*, &c. when *emperors and kings* took upon them to convene councils, to explain doctrines, and establish faith by dint of *civil* authority ; cherishing and upholding one party by worldly honours and preferments ; but terrifying and crushing others by banishment, confiscations, imprisonment and death : finally ; when *the clergy* had both the terrors and the riches of this world, much at their disposal ; and the spirit of *true piety, fortitude, and faith* began to languish in the church (as it miserably languished, in the times when *image-worship* and *transubstantiation* were brought

brought in) and a spirit of *pride* and *domination*, of *sensuality* and *sloth* sprung up in its room.—When this, I say, was the case, such an *universal departure* from the Apostles doctrine and practice may seem easily to be accounted for, and has nothing in it so strange. But—when the circumstances of *the church* were the very *reverse* of all this; harrassed and severely pressed by persecutions from without; split into various sects and angry parties within; destitute of worldly *honours* to recommend, and of worldly *terrors* to enforce, any doctrine or practice; and acknowledging no visible, supreme, infallible *head*, as having *dominion over its faith*; when this was the case (as in the *three* first centuries, when *Infant-Baptism* has been shewn *universally* to prevail, it manifestly was) every one sees the *wide* the *vast* difference; and must confess the impossibility of *so universally corrupting* the APOSTOLIC doctrine and practice of *baptising ONLY the ADULT*, if any such there had been; and of foisting in, throughout the whole world, *Infant-Baptism* in its stead.

So that, upon the whole, it appears a clear and a very strongly attested *fact*.—That the practice, of *baptising* of INFANTS was primitive and apostolic; and that the *first* Christian churches were every where formed and established upon *this* scheme.

But the EXAMPLES of *Scripture Baptism*, our brethren are wont to urge, are all on their side.—This is confidently, indeed, asserted; but upon a closer examination will be found a manifest *mistake*. There being not, in the whole scripture, *ONE single instance* of the Baptism for which they plead, and which is practised amongst them, viz. *that those who are born of Christian parents, are to be suffered to become adult before they are baptised*.—This, it is to be observed carefully, is the *point* in question betwixt us. As for the case of *adult proselytes*, or

converts to christianity, *these*, we all agree, are not to be baptised 'till they personally *profess faith*. The *scripture* instances therefore of *such proselytes*, baptised upon *such profession*, are of no pertinence nor weight at all in the controverſie before us: for *these* are exactly conſonant to our ſentiments and practice. The *only* point in debate is—*what is to be done with the INFANTS of these proselytes?*—Are they to be baptised with their parents?—Or; are they to be let alone 'till they become adult, and then be baptised upon their personal profeſſion? This latter, our brethren ſay; but have not in the whole ſcripture, I again affirm it, *one inſtance* of ſuch practice; no, nor any ſhadow or appearance of it. Their *boasts*, therefore, of ſcripture *instances, precedents, examples*, are meer ſound, and nothing elſe. Whereas the inſtance of *Lydia*, Acts xvi. 14, 15. (not to mention *Stephanas* and the *jaylor*) ſtrongly favours *our practice*; whoſe faith *alone* is mentioned, and, immediately it is added, *her houſehold were baptiſed*.

The RELIGIOUS or MORAL purposes of Infant-Baptiſm.

IF it be asked—what are the *moral* purpoſes of this Baptiſm of Infants? or, of what real *benefit* or *uſe* in religion? It were ſufficient to reply—of the ſame benefit and uſe as *Infant-circumciſion* was; which is acknowledged to have been *injoined* by God, and *practiſed* by his church, for more than *two thouſand* years.—But I add; it is of great *moral* benefit; as it is both a ſolemn *vow* or *dedication* on our part, and a gracious *condeſcenſion* and *promiſe* on God's.

FIRST. It is a ſolemn *vow* or *dedication* on our part. For, herein, the religious parent publickly
recog-

recognises his own covenant with GOD: binds himself by a sacred promise to watch over the *immortal soul*, now committed to his charge, and to train it up in a religious manner; and devotes first *himself*, and then his *helpless Infant*, to the divine patronage and care. By being *baptised into the NAME*, the child is solemnly given up to the dominion and favour, and is received as the peculiar property, the subject and charge, of *the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST* (q). And to one who well considers, into what a world of various difficulties, temptations and sins, his Infants are born; how every age and path of life is beset with dangers and snares; and what consequences, of awful moment, depend upon *the manner* in which they pass the present state—to him that considers this, it cannot but appear an inestimable *privilege* to be permitted to give them up, in this solemn manner, to the gracious protection and conduct of heaven.

The sentiments of a *religious* parent, on such an occasion, may be thus expressed.—“ I acknowledge, *Almighty God*, with the greatest thankfulness and joy, thine *absolute* right in me, and in all that is mine. This *child*, which thou hast given me, I receive as from thine hand. It is *thine*, for thou hast formed it, and redeemed it by the blood of thine only begotten son. To *THEE* therefore I now solemnly *devote* and *give it up*: to be guarded by thy *providence*; ministred to by thine *angels*; influenced by *thy SPIRIT*; conducted safe through the many dangers and

H 2

“ evils

(q) *Baptising in* (or *into*) *the name*—signifies, commending a person to the peculiar *blessing* and *patronage* of him, or them, in whose *name* he is baptised. Thus, when the form of solemn benediction is prescribed, *Numb. vi. 23.*—*The LORD bless thee, and keep thee, &c.* It is added—*And they shall PUT MY NAME upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them.*

“ evils of this present world, and to be preserved
 “ to thine everlasting kingdom and glory in the
 “ other.

“ For ever blessed be thy name, that as *by one*
 “ *man’s offence*, JUDGMENT came upon all to con-
 “ demnation and death; even so by the righteousness
 “ of one, the FREE GIFT comes upon all to justifica-
 “ tion of life. That as the fatal effects of the first
 “ ADAM’s sin extend to our *Infant-offspring*, subject-
 “ ing them to pain, to misery, and death; so, the
 “ salutary effects of the second ADAM’s righteou-
 “ ness extend also to *these*, raising them to glory,
 “ to happiness and life.—

“ I render unfeigned thanks, that the blessings
 “ of redemption and of the covenant of grace, reach
 “ also to *them*. That thou hast COMMANDED that
 “ *little children be brought into thy presence*, to receive
 “ thy solemn benediction, and hast declared them
 “ to belong to thy family and kingdom. That the bap-
 “ tismal water is appointed as a standing monument
 “ of thy favour and gracious acceptance of them?
 “ and that by this figure is represented, thy readi-
 “ ness to pour down thy spirit upon our seed, and thy
 “ blessing upon our offspring (r).—LORD I believe!
 “ I most thankfully accept this liberty which is
 “ given me. I here bring my helpless Infant,
 “ commending it to God, and the power of his
 “ grace. Oh take it into thy family, and into the
 “ arms of thy love! Pour down thy blessings on
 “ it; and write its name in the book of life! May
 “ it be sanctified from the womb: consecrated a chosen
 “ vessel, fitted for thy service! May thy SPIRIT
 “ descend upon, and dwell continually in it, as a
 “ new principle of life; gradually rectifying the
 “ disorders of its nature; rooting out the seeds of
 “ vanity and folly which may spring up in its heart;
 “ enlight-

“ enlightening its understanding, strengthening its
 “ moral powers, purifying and controuling its ap-
 “ petites and passions; and forming it into a living
 “ temple and habitation of God!

“ Guard and preserve the life, which thou hast
 “ thus graciously bestowed! Conduct it through
 “ the dangers of childhood and youth! Spare it,
 “ if it be thy will, to be a blessing to its friends;
 “ and a burning and shining light, amidst a dark
 “ and corrupt world! As it grows in years, may
 “ it continually grow in grace, in wisdom, and in
 “ virtue, and *in favour with God and men!* Grant
 “ me, ever to walk before it with a wise and per-
 “ fect heart: to bring it up in the fear and in the
 “ nurture of the Lord: and so faithfully to dis-
 “ charge my duty, in every respect towards it, that
 “ I may at last meet it with joy at thy kingdom
 “ and appearance, and with triumph then say—
 “ *behold me, and the child which thou hast given me!*”

And as it is thus a solemn *vow* and *dedication* on
 our part: so it is

SECONDLY. A most gracious *condescension* and
promise on God's. It is a *token* of his covenant; a
memorial or *sign* that he graciously accepts both the
 religious parent and his child, and *that HE WILL*
be their God. By this rite he assures us, that as,
 in the wisdom of his providence, he *treats Infants*
as sinners, through the transgression of *Adam*; so,
 in the riches of his grace, he had opened a foun-
 tain for their cleansing: will *treat them as righteous*
 through the obedience of *CHRIST*: and will give
 them *his SPIRIT* to quicken, regenerate and raise
 them to life. Of this *SPIRIT* the *baptismal water*
 is the appointed *emblem* or *sign*; and by command-
 ing it to be poured on them he virtually saith—

“ *Suffer the LITTLE CHILDREN to come unto me,*
 “ *and forbid them not:* for *THESE* also I account as
 “ sub-

“ subjects of my *moral* kingdom, and as a part of
 “ that *church*, or *chosen society*, over whom I will
 “ exercise a peculiar providence and care.

“ And the *child*, which the pious parent has thus
 “ devoted to me, I deliver back to him again :
 “ with a *solemn charge* that he ever, henceforth,
 “ consider it as my property. Train it up as for my
 “ service. Teach it early the principles of Christian
 “ knowledge and virtue. Pray daily with, and for
 “ it. Set before it a good example : and watch
 “ over it as one who must shortly give account, to
 “ the *great shepherd* when he shall appear. So only,
 “ mayest thou hope that it will be thy comfort and
 “ delight in this world ; and thy joy, and everlasting
 “ crown of rejoicing, in the other.”

These are some of the *pious sentiments*, which the Baptism of an Infant naturally suggests. Considered in this light, it appears to be of great *moral benefit*: a most rational and proper service, or act of *religion*. It manifestly tends to enlarge and to confirm a Christian's *faith* and *hope* in God, with regard to his helpless *child*—to give a clearer and more extensive view of the great scheme of *redemption*—to render parents more *faithful*, more *diligent*, and *serious* in the education of their children ; if their lives are continued : and if they are taken from them, it affords the noblest *support* and *consolation* in their death.

I here beg leave to add—that there is a vast difference in the *genius* and *temper* of children, even in their most *early* years, every one sees. What influence the DIVINE SPIRIT has in forming the *human mind*, even in its *Infant State* ; and moulding it into a *preparation* for future usefulness and virtue—We cannot certainly say. Probably very great : for *John*, it is said, *Luke* i. 15. *was filled with the HOLY GHOST from his mother's womb*. The prophet

phet *Iſaiah*, was called and formed from the womb, to be a peculiar meſſenger of heaven to inſtruct and reclaim the people. *Iſa. xlix. 1, 2, 5.* And of *Jeremy* it is ſaid, *before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee: and before thou cameſt forth out of the womb, I ſanctified thee, and ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. Jer. i. 5.*

It is then, a rational act of worſhip; for parents, from the very dawn and *firſt beginnings* of life, to devote their children to God, and to the peculiar influences of his *ſpirit*. And it is a very merciful and wiſe appointment, ſurely, if God has inſtituted any *rite*, or *ſacrament* of religion, in which believing parents are *commanded* thus to dedicate their Infants to him; and in which he gives them a *ſolemn token* that he will pour his ſpirit and bleſſing on them. This is done in *Baptiſm*. The *water* poured on them, being an apt and proper *emblem* of his readineſs to hear the prayers of the pious parent, and to give *his ſpirit* to the child—to preſide over, and aſſiſt, it's intellectual and moral powers—to form it to a love of virtue—and to fit and pre-diſpoſe it for uſefulneſs in future life (s).

Upon the whole then we conclude—that it being an undoubted PRIVILEGE of the *Chriſtian* diſpenſation, as it was of both the *Abrahamic* and *Mosaic* of old, that the *Infants of believers* (t) ſhould be

(s) Mr. *Tombs*, the learned Antipedobaptiſt, acknowledges that the *grace* of God may put Infants into *Chriſt*, and unite them to him by his *ſpirit*. Vid. *Examen. §. 10.* Suppose, ſays one, there were a *Maſter*, who had the ſecret of *pre-diſpoſing* the brain in order to future learning, or of giving a *principle* or *power* of future knowledge; would it not be a very reaſonable and deſireable thing to put Infants under his management; and might they not thenceforward be counted ſcholars, or *disciples*, to him, though not yet actually taught?

(t) By *Infants of Believers*, are not to be underſtood only their *natural offspring*; but *any Infants* which are their property,

56 *The Moral Purposes and Use, &c.*

be taken, together with themselves, into *covenant with God* : it becomes us, with great thankfulness, to accept of this favour ; to dedicate our *children*, as well as *ourselves*, in this solemn manner to him : and thus publickly to declare—that *WE, and OUR HOUSEHOLD, will serve the LORD.*

ty, or members of their household, or for whose religious education they will solemnly undertake. Thus, not only *Abraham's* own children, but all *born in his house, or bought with his money*, he was commanded to *circumcise*. *Gen. xvii. 13.* So when *Lydia*, the *jaylor*, and *Stephanas* were baptised, it is particularly observed, that their *households* were baptised with them. *Foundling Infants*, therefore, are very rationally brought to *Baptism*, by those who will engage solemnly for their *Christian* education.

F I N I S.





A P P E N D I X.

Additional Notes to the Baptism of Infants, &c.

INTRODUC. lin. 16. from the end—Add, *The light of nature* itself seems plainly to have taught this. It was the custom of the *Romans*, on the ninth day from the child's birth (which was called the *lustrical*, or the day of *purification*) for its friends and relations to bring it to the temple, and before the altars of the gods; to recommend it to the protection of some tutelar deity. *Middleton's Life of Cicero*. Vol. I. pag. 6. A ceremony of the same nature also was performed amongst the *Greeks*.

Under Argument IV. pag. 29. read the note (z) at the bottom, thus, This sentiment of an *Infant's* HOLINESS, and of the propriety and duty of its being brought into the Church of GOD, and there solemnly devoted to him, was quite *scriptural* and *rational*; as well as perfectly agreeable to the appointed customs and forms, and language of those times. For, *Luke ii. 22, 23.* 'tis said—*They brought the Infant Jesus to the Temple, to PRESENT HIM TO THE LORD: As it is written in the law; Every first born male shall be HOLY to the Lord.* Hence it plainly follows. 1. That *Infants* are capable of *Holiness*: and that some were accounted *holy* (i.e. taken into a more peculiar relation to GOD) whilst others were not. And 2. That our LORD himself, when an *Infant*, passed under a *sacred ceremony*, of the same nature with *our Infants* when we bring

A P P E N D I X.

bring them to be *baptised*. The Infant JESUS, like *ours*, was brought to the place of worship, there *solemnly to be presented*, or devoted, *to the LORD*.

Pag. 41. lin. 3. from the end. To—*Denying the Sacrament of Baptism to Infants*, add, *and promising the kingdom of Heaven to any without the redemption of Christ*.

Pag. 42. lin. 1. Margin. For *de Nat. & Gratiâ*, Leg. *de Pec. Merit*.

At the bottom of pag. 46. Subjoin this note. *Ircæus, Epiphanius, Philastrius, Austin, and Theodoret*, it has been justly observed, each of them wrote *Catalogues* of the several *Se&ts* and *Sorts* of Christians they had ever heard of; but none of them mention any that denied *Infant Baptism*, except those who denied *all Baptism*.







